

# LETTER

To the REVEREND

Mr. BENJAMIN LORD,  
Of NORWICH;

Occasioned by some harsh Things which  
he has lately published against Those who have  
dissented from his Sentiments about the MINI-  
TRY, the CHURCH, and BAPTISM.

By ISAAC BACKUS,

Pastor of a Church of CHRIST, in Middleborough.

Great men are not always wise. —— I said I will also answer  
my part, I also will shew mine opinion. JOB xxxii. 9, 17.

But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call  
heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things  
which are written in the law and the prophets. ACTS xxiv. 14.



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GILDEMAN ET AL.

## ANSWER

January 30

## GENERAL DATA

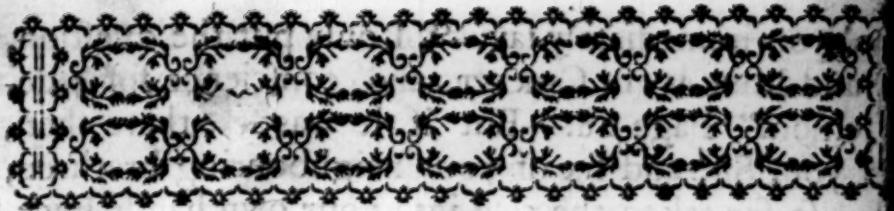


John D. Linn, 1864-1865, and John C. Linn, 1865-1866.

11. *Leucanthemum vulgare* L. (Lam.)

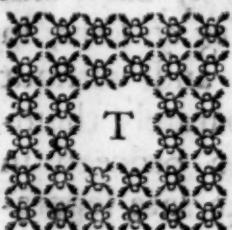
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CHARLES W. DUNNELLON  
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# A LETTER to Mr. BENJAMIN LORD, of NORWICH.

*Reverend and Honoured SIR,*



O *do to others as we would have them* to us, must be allowed to be the universal rule of equity ; yet, alas ! how far is it from being universally practised ? and I have thought that it is often as little regarded in the management of disputes about religion, as in almost any affair at all : a view of which has caused in my mind these many years, a great cautiousness of engaging in any warm debates : tho' where the cause of truth really calls for it, no doubt there is warrant still to appear in it's defence. Such a call seems now to present itself to my view ; for as you, Sir, have lately exerted yourself considerably, to support the cause of the churches and ministry that are established by law in our land, so you have not failed to represent the characters and sentiments of those who have lately dissented therefrom, in very odious, and I believe, in very unjust colours. In your sermon at Mr. Hart's ordination at Preston, 1762, you assert, that " no just cause of withdrawal from your assemblies can be produced," and ask, " what meaneth this conduct ?" which seems to require an answer.

you immediately say, " I only put the question, and leave it to CHRIST and conscience for a decision." Page 28.—But if it was left there then, you, Sir, and six of your neighbouring brethren, have so far taken the case into your own hands since, that, in a preface which you have added to a new edition of Mr. Dickinson's dialogue about *infant baptism*, just published, after mentioning the direction to ministers, to *blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound the alarm in the holy mountain*, and then just touching upon some other evils, which now expose us to God's judgments, you go on to say, " very especially, the error and iniquity of *going in the way of Cain*, and following the example of *the gainsaying of Core*, in departing from God's institutions, and without any scriptural warrant, setting up separately themselves." Page 4. And in page 7, you proceed in sounding the alarm, thus, " Do not the late separations, and one separation from another, already discover their nature by their fruits ? in that some have by this time apostatised even from all religion : while some others are renouncing infant baptism, and going fast to the like dreadful apostacy.—It is hid from them, that *evil men and seducers wax worse and worse* : it is hid from them, or rather, they will not see that they have fell *into the way of Cain*, and are in danger of *perishing in the gainsaying of Core*." Thus Sir, you and your brethren have decided the case with a witness, and if there was no appeal from our judgment, in your own cause, our case would be ad indeed. I say *in your own cause* ; for the whole procedure evidently goes upon this supposition, that our ministers are as certainly right, as those were that *Core* appeared against, and that your churches in their present order, are as certainly right as those which *evil men and seducers* departed from in *Paul's* time :

time: and if so, then pray who is it that are “ in  
“ their own esteem, holier and better than others.”

Page 7.

Now as I happen to be one against whom this dreadful indictment is laid, for leaving your church, and since that infant baptism, the law of self-defence will warrant a criminal to speak, before he is condemned; but the nobler principle of regard to the honor of God and good of souls, even demand a reply, when truth and reformation are represented by men of note, as error and apostacy, which I believe in my heart is the case here. Therefore, without any further apology, I shall make a few *remarks* upon some passages in your late writings, and then give some of the scripture *grounds* and *reasons* of my sentiments and conduct, in the points which you condemn me for; and so leave it to every conscience to judge, whether that is justly called the way of apostacy or no.

THE first remark that I shall make, is upon page 18 of Mr. Hart's ordination sermon, where you say of CHRIST, “ He was sent as well as furnished, (see “ Luke iv. 18, 19) and so must we be; else the disciple covets to be above his master; which is the case with those that imagine the fullness of the spirit (or singular gifts) which they think they possess, doth warrant their assuming the character, “ and entering on the work of ministers of CHRIST.” In this, I suppose, you have some reference to what I have said on that point in my discourse on an *internal call to preach the gospel*; but I am sorry you had not stated it more fairly. We don't argue that persons have a warrant to enter into the ministry, merely from their having singular gifts; but we are of opinion, that those to whom God has given grace and singular gifts, he commands to improve them: his

his command is very express, *As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God, &c.* 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11. Rom. xii. 6—8. And we believe that the spirit of God, by light and truth, must make that clear to the soul, in order for their going forth ; and that his teachings and call, gives warrant sufficient to go upon and improve the gifts which he has given, and that will open the way for their being introduced and ordained in the church of CHRIST. You go on to say, “ And what great confusion doth this tend unto ? would it not tend to throw the STATE into confusion if any man that would, might set up for a civil magistrate, who thought himself fit, and could find a party to encourage and follow him ? and why should it not tend to make the same mischief in the church ? ” But would Mr. *Lord* have us understand that he claims the same power in the church, for himself and brethren, as rulers have in the state, to give commissions to such only as they please ? If ministers have such power given them, why did Zion’s king reprove his disciples for assuming the power of forbidding one to act in his name, because *he followed not them* ? and why did he tell them, when at strife about who should be greatest, that it should *not be so among them*, as it was in the civil state ?\* No doubt but his instructions made *Paul* and *Peter*, so very cautious against *dominion* and *lordship* in the church of CHRIST. 2 Cor. i. 24. 1 Pet. v. 3. We hold to ordination of church officers as well as you ; but one main dispute is about where the right of ordination lies : you, Sir, shew a great dislike against the arguments of some, as if reason Ch were to govern in that affair, (page 23) tho’ I think we that Mr

that you have several far-fetch'd reasonings about it in that sermon. In general you hold forth, that CHRIST received his commission from his Father, and that he sent forth the apostles, and that they ordained *Timothy* and others, who were to commit the things which they had heard to faithful men, which carries it down to the ministry which should continue to the end. Page. 20, 24. And by all your arguing, you plainly endeavour to represent, that the common ministers of our land, have their authority in a line of succession thus down from the apostles.—Yet since them has been the apostacy of the church of *Rome*, and then the breaking off from that in the *reformation*; and in our nation, we are told by one of the best informed historians that this country ever bred, that after the nation had been overspread with *popery* and cruelty in *Mary's* days, and queen *Elizabeth* was advanced in her stead, that on “December 15, 1559. “Dr. Parker was consecrated archbishop of *Canterbury*, by three *deprived* bishops: then they consecrate the rest.” *Mr. Prince's New-England's Chronology*, page 98. From those *deprived* bishops then, the church of *England* ministers derive their succession; and they afterwards used their power so as to silence and deprive many of the best ministers in the nation, for not conforming to their corrupt ways. Numbers of these came over and settled this country; and as censures and deprivations plainly take away all the authority which was given by them that lay on the censure; so it seems that our fathers did not pretend to act by any power derived from the *bishops*; but the first ministers in *Salem*, *Boston*, and many other places, were ordained by their churches. See *Prince's Chronology*, page 189, and Vol. II. pag. 73. Yea, we have often been told (and I believe truly) that *Mr. Fitch*, the first minister of that church which you, Sir,

Sir, now stand pastor of, was ordained by the church ; the two deacons being appointed by them to perform that work. And the *Cambridge* platform, and other writings, so plainly express it, that I can't think you will deny that they held the right of ordination to be in the church. And if it is now supposed that they erred therein, yet which way will they that derive their succession from them, make out a whole line clear back to the apostles ? if you don't like that reason should govern in this case, would you have us throw reason away so much, as to believe gross absurdities to be consistent truths ? But if this is not enough, the truths which are given into in Mr. *Hart's* ordination sermon, are quite sufficient to shew the inconsistency of imagining that ministerial authority is derived by an external line of an uninterrupted succession of regular ordinations down from the apostles. For (1.) you observe, that the scriptures determine that *bishops* and *presbyters*, or *elders*, are the same. *Page 20.* Well then, surely the *lord bishops*, which claim so much superiority over the *presbyters*, and act *single* in ordinations, are beside the scripture line, and therefore can't transmit that line down to others.

(2.) You observe of ministers, that " In the discharge of this ministry given to them, they must use the very word of reconciliation committed to them.—An ambassador sent by a prince, must keep to his orders, speak the very mind of his employer, and not go a step beside his will ; for, then he is beside his business, acts out of character, and without commission. So here, CHRIST's ambassadors derive their commission from him, not from the church ; not from the ordainers, but from CHRIST only." *Page 24, 25.*

THIS, Sir, is right ; this puts the succession where it ought to be, in the line of divine truth, and every

*one that is of the truth heareth Christ's voice.* Joh. xviii. 37. But all that are out of that line, *act out of character*, and *without commission*, let them pretend to a descent from *Peter* or *Paul*, as much as they will. The ancient commission to teach and baptize, is plainly limitted there, viz. *Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world.* Amen. Matt. xxviii. 20. JESUS never promised his presence with any who turn aside from the line of truth, let them be ordained how they will: Yea, so far from it, that if *Paul*, or an *angel from heaven*, should thus turn aside, the *curse* and not the *promise* would be the consequence. Gal. i. 8. And where is the *protestant* in the world, that will pretend that there has been an uninterrupted succession of ordained ministers clear down from the apostles, who have none of them grossly perverted the *gospel of Christ*?

HAVING thus given some brief touches concerning the ministry, I shall nextly make a few remarks upon what you have said about baptism. In your late discourse on *Sober-mindedness*, page 16, in warning young people against erroneous persons, you say, " Some few, I perceive, begin already to follow such, " and to hearken unto corrupt doctrines, which " tend to their renouncing of their infant baptism,— " which you may be assured, is a dangerous road, " and often issueth fatally; to which purpose " might be recited, facts of ancient date in foreign " countries, and in our own, enough to make both " ears to tingle." And in the next page, you refer to the *annabaptists* in *Germany*, 240 years ago, whom Mr. *Dickinson* calls " the madmen of *Munster* :" But pray, Sir, why are we so often referred to them, in this controversy about baptism? when we have in no respect a whit more, if so much relation to them, as

you have to the pope of *Rome*. Were they *annabaptists*?—so is he a *pædobaptist*. Did they use violence to support their cause?—so does he, even imprisonment and death, to maintain his:—and let every conscience judge which party has the greatest resemblance to such methods now. You know, Sir, that there have been numerous instances of late years, among us, of imprisonments and confiscations of goods, for no greater crime than refusing to conform to, and support that worship which you are pleading for. I know 'tis pretended that those people at *Munster*, were the first that appeared against infant baptism; but that is sufficiently proved by many to be a groundless pretence. Mr. *Crosby*, in the preface to the first volume of his *history of the English baptists*, has produced authorities from *pædobaptist* writers, of no less than seven other different periods of time, which they assign for the original of this opinion. Dr. *Gill* has done the like, in his answer to Mr. *Dickinson's* dialogue; by which, compared with Mr. *Peter Clark's* defence thereof against him, it appears, not only that many, both of ministers and people, in various parts of *Germany* and *Switzerland*, suffered death for denying infant baptism, sundry years before that affair in *Munster*; but also, that at several different times, witnesses have appeared against that practice, clear back to the third century; and that is the earliest express mention thereof, that Mr. *Clark*, with the help of Dr. *Wall's* famous *history of infant baptism*, has been able to bring. Near the beginning of that century, *Origen* appeared for infant baptism, and said that it takes away the pollution of our birth;\* but *Tertullian* appeared against it. So that we have as early account of that practice being opposed, as we have

have of its being expressly mentioned : And no wonder it was opposed ; for they called baptism *regeneration*, thinking, it seems, that being *born of water*, intends baptism : and if so, then that infants must be baptised, or they could not be saved.

PERMIT me therefore, here to insert the words of Dr. *Barlow*, afterwards bishop of *Lincoln* :—he, after much search into these things, in a letter to Mr. *Tombes*, frankly owns thus, *viz.*\* “ The truth is, I “ do believe, *pædobaptism*, how or by whom I know “ not, came into the world in the second century. “ and in the third and fourth began to be practised “ tho' not generally ; and defended, as lawful, from “ the text grossly misunderstood, *Job.* iii. 5. Upon “ the like gross mistake of *John* vi. 53, they did, for “ many centuries, both in the *Greek* and *Latin* church “ communicate infants, and give them the Lord’s “ supper ; and I do confess, says he, they might do “ both, as well as either.”

AND as there is no truth in representing that the first *baptists* began at *Münster* ; so, on a careful search I find, that their character has been exceeding falsely represented in our own nation. The chief account that the public have had of them, have been from their adversaries, till about twenty-five years ago, Mr. *Thomas Crosby*, of *London*, published a history of them in four volumes. Therein he has shewn, that about the time of the long parliament, Mr. *John Tombes*, Mr. *Henry Jessey*, Mr. *Hanserd Knollys*, Mr. *Wavesor Powel*, and many others, who had been educated at the universities in *England*, and were as pious and successful as almost any preachers in their day, embraced the *baptist* principles, and suffered a great deal therefor too, with a courage and patience equa-

\* *Crosby's history*, preface, page 56.

to any of the witnesses for CHRIST in that day. And a great part of what they suffered was from the *Presbyterians*, who when they had got the power into their own hands, wrote and acted smartly against tolerating other sects : to which Dr. *Watts* evidently refers, when he says, \* " 'Tis a pain and shame to our " eyes to look backward upon other times, and to " behold pamphlets written against toleration, by such " as are ministers of the gospel of peace, that perfect " law of liberty. 'Twas their opinion then, (and they " told the world so in print) that *sectaries* ought to " be silenced by the civil power. Now *sectary* is a " name of broad dimensions, and has a terrible " stretch with it ; the long scourge would in time " reach all those who differ from the hand that ma- " nages that weapon of chastisement : none must be " authorized to preach in any form, but by the so- " lemnity of imposing hands, by a company of autho- " rized men." I wish our country was clear of such a temper in these days. But to proceed ;—those experimental writers *Bunyan* and *Keach*,† whose works have been greatly esteemed by our pious fathers, were of this denomination ; and the author of that masterly piece, *Delaulne's plea for the nonconformists*, was a member of Mr. *Keach's* church, in *London*. Mr. *Thomas Wilcox*, who wrote the *choice drop of honey from the rock CHRIST*, which has been much esteemed in *New-England*, was pastor of a *baptist* church also in that city.

BUT

\* *Orthodoxy and Charity*, page 229.

† Mr. *Keach*, one hundred years ago this very year, was imprisoned, set twice in the pillory, and fined twenty pounds, sterling, for writing and publishing a little book ; and the two chief points which they condemned in it, were the same that we hold about the subjects of baptism, and an internal call to preach the gospel. *Crosby*.

BUT time would fail to speak of many other noble witnesses and sufferers, of this persuasion, in that land ; therefore I will come to the settlers in *New-England* ;—and I find, that of the two churches which first separated in *England*, and then moved into *Holland*, before they came here, one of them, (*viz.* Mr. *Smith*'s church) mainly embraced the *baptist* principles, and numbers of them afterwards moved back to *London*, and promoted the same there ;\* tho' their dissenting brethren treated them very roughly therefor ; which divisions among themselves were improved then as an argument against all the separation from the national church, + “ Let us, (said an author then) “ look among the separated congregations, and consider their manifold divisions, both in *judgment* and “ *practice* ; and there we cannot but see a babel of “ confusion, separating each from other,” &c. just as you argue against us now. Dr. *Cotton Mather* observes, † that the most eminent reformers, in their writings, used to represent the *annabaptists* to be, “ an inordinate kind of men, stirred up by the devil, to the destruction of the gospel, &c.—Nevertheless, (says he) it is well known, that of later time, there have been a great many *antipædobaptists*, who have never deserved so hard a character among the churches of God. Infant baptism hath been scrupled by multitudes in our days, who have been in other points, most worthy christians, and as holy, watchful, fruitful and heavenly people, as perhaps any in the world. Some few of these people have been among the *planters* of *New-England*, from the beginning.” But after they proceeded to form a distinct church of that persuasion, at *Boston*, on *May* 28,

\* *Crofby's history*, vol. I. page 91, 272. + *Crofby's history*, vol. I. page 93. † *Eccl. hist. New-England*, lib. VII. p. 26.

28, 1665, he observes, that the court enacted some laws against them: tho' he elsewhere says of *Plymouth* colony, which had one such church among them (i. e. at *Swanzey*) that \* "there being many good men among those,—I do not know that they have been persecuted with any harder means, than kind conferences to reclaim them." And in a late piece, I find, that colony, never made any capital laws against the Quakers, as others did.† Here remark; *Plymouth* settlers left the national church, and suffered for it in their native land; but the *Massachusetts* settlers chiefly shunned that cross, till they had gotten on this side the ocean;‡ and they were most forward to persecute all that dissented from them here.—And so it generally has proved, that those who have suffered for conscience sake themselves, are not so forward to croud upon the consciences of their neighbours, as others are.

Now to come to later times, by "facts enough to make both ears to tingle," I presume, Sir, you don't mean the large donations of *Thomas Hollis*, Esq; of *London*, to *Harvard College*; nor the liberal gifts of Mr. *Isaac Hollis*, towards the gospelizing the *Indians* at *Stockbridge*, whom Dr. *Colman* calls a *pious baptist minister near London*.§ As to the former of these, when the news of his death came over, Dr. *Colman*, preached a funeral sermon for him, before the General Court in *Boston*, on *Apriit 1, 1731*, which was printed by their order. Dr. *Wigglesworth*, and Mr. *Greenwood*, the two professors in the college which bore his name, printed each of them a discourse on

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\* Lib. I. p. 14. vide *Croby's hist.* vol. I. p. 112, 113, 120.

† Account of *Plymouth* church, at the end of Mr. *Robbins's* ordination sermon, 1760, page 15.

‡ *Prince's Chronology*, page 237.

§ *Christian history*, for 1743, page 150, &c.

the same occasion ; to which president *Wadsworth*, wrote a preface. In these, Mr. *Wadsworth*, after mentioning of other benefactions, says, “ But the late “ *Thomas Hollis*, Esq; of *London*, merchant, now gone “ to his everlasting rest, did in his *donations* to our “ college, far exceed any other of its benefactors.” Mr. *Greenwood* calls him, “ that unpararelled benefactor to this *society* :” and Dr. *Wiggleworth* says, that “ by his frequent and ample benefactions, for “ the encouragement of theological, as well as human “ knowledge among us, who are christians of a *different* denomination from himself, he hath set such “ an example, of a generous, catholic, and christian “ spirit, as hath never before fallen within my obser- “ vation, nor so far as I now remember, within my “ reading.” Dr. *Coleman* says, “ That which is sin- “ gular in the piety and benefits of Mr. *Hollis*, unto “ these churches, was, that tho’ he was not strictly “ of our way, nor in judgment with us in the “ point of *infant baptism*, yet his heart and hand was “ the same to us, as if we had been one in opinion “ and practice with him. And in this let him stand “ a teaching pattern and example to us, of a noble, “ christian, catholic, apostolic spirit of love ; which “ makes those that differ in lesser matters, to receive “ one another to the glory of God, and a shining “ testimony against a narrow party spirit, which is “ so much the disgrace and detriment of the *protes-* “ *tant interest* ; and which so early began among the “ disciples of *JESUS*, and was rebuked by him, even “ in *John* himself, that apostle of love and charity “ afterwards, who once said to *CHRIST*, in a fret of “ zeal, *Master*, we saw one casting out devils in thy “ name, and he followeth not us, and we forbid him, be- “ cause he followeth not us. But *Jesus* said forbid him “ not.”

THE doctor goes on to shew what it was that fixed and enlarged that generous heart to do these things : Says he, " It was some account Mr. Hollis received " from us, of the free and catholic air we breathe at " our Cambridge,—that took his generous heart, &c."\* But where is this free and catholic air gone now, when those who embrace Mr. Hollis's sentiments about baptism, are stigmatized with the most odious characters and names, that scripture or history can furnish ? and that by those who are esteemed fathers of their country.

THAT there have been bad men in this and other countries, that were called *baptists*, I don't scruple ; and I have as little thought that you, Sir, will pretend any other concerning your own denomination. If some of our persuasion formerly left family prayer, and a regard to the christian sabbath, &c. which you mention ;—so many on your side persecuted them with imprisonment and banishment : And the late Mr. Cooper, of *Boston*, declares, that " the religion " that allows of, and directs to the persecution of " those that dissent from it, wears the mark and " brand of a false religion."† And I have great reason to think that those persecutions had a great influence in driving many from the observance of many things which were right, that the opposite party held. Antipathy has a strange influence on the mind ; and to my knowledge, many of the present generation have made use of those hard dealings, as an argument against family worship ; just as others would of their loose behaviour against believers baptism : but truth ought to be received for it's own sake, let who will own, or deny it.

You

\* See *Croby's history*, vol. IV. page 217, 218, 222, 226, 229.

† Sermon on *Job*. xxiv. 15. page 22.

You, Sir, profess a great zeal for the religion of our fathers, and represent us as going in the way of apostacy therefrom. Bear with me then, while we a little further consider this charge.

THEY held, "that every particular church of CHRIST is only to consist of such as appear to believe in, and obey him."\* And in admitting members, their custom was, to confess with the mouth, or verbally to declare what GOD had done for their souls. *Plymouth* church alter'd from this custom, to writing relations, in 1705.† Some others, I suppose, did sooner; and from that, many have got to drop the giving of any relation at all. And as to baptism, our fathers held, that none should bring their children thereto, but church members; but when another generation was coming on to have children, and yet many of them had not faith to bring their offspring, this occasioned great struggles about the subjects of baptism, to remove which, a synod was called twenty-seven years after *Boston* was first settled; but that did not do it: therefore another was convened in *Boston*, in 1662, which advised to the receiving of persons to own the covenant, or what is vulgarly called the half way members; which was readily acceded to by many, tho' *Plymouth* church did not consent to it till 1731.‡ From that, many have got the other half way now: and what less, Sir, are you and your brethren a doing, when you assert,§ that the covenant with *Abraham* and his seed, is the same now, in the form and manner of it, as it was under the old dispensation? I suppose all allow that the church then was national.

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Further

\* *New-England Chronology*, page 91.

† Account at the end of Mr. *Robbins's* sermon, page 31.

‡ Account aforesaid, page 24.

§ Appendix to Mr. *Dickinson's* dialogue, page 1, 2, 3.

Further you assert, that "CHRIST esteemed those little ones as believers, visibly so. And now is it Christ-like to cast them off, as if not belonging to the visible church?—Alas! what are those people a doing, who are excluding infants from the visible church?" And after mentioning that text, *Matt. xvi. 18. Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,* you add, "these powers of hell, will by various engines attempt it, and one of them may be endeavouring to exclude infants from the visible church and baptism." And paraphrasing a little further, you say, "And is not this promise, *that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,* connected with the covenant made with *Abraham and his seed,* to all generations, securing among the rest, this part of the visible church, *viz.* the infant seed of his people?" If this don't favour strongly of a national church, I desire to know what does? All are infants before they are adult; and if all the infants of professors are *visible believers,* "belong to the visible church," and are "part of the visible church, which are secured upon the rock by CHRIST's promise," then how mistaften were our fathers, in so often declaring that the gospel church is not national! Indeed, they were not aware, that infant baptism laid the foundation of a national church, as now 'tis fully prov'd that it did:—here therefore we part;—we retain the old sentiments about the church, and the manner of admitting members into it, and drop that point which is of a contrary nature: that point you take, and build quite another church than our fathers had any thought of.

LET it be further observed, that the *baptists* are often represented to be unsound in the doctrines of grace, and you represent, that their sentiments about baptism

baptism have a dangerous tendency :—but what tendency has it to tell children that they are born in covenant with God, and that they are secured upon the rock by CHRIST's promise? Nay, Mr. *Dickinson*, in his dialogue, page 30, in order finally to convince his neighbour that our infants are in covenant with God, says thus, “ The covenant of works included “ the children of *Adam*,—now then, if *Adam's* poste-“ rity were taken into, and considered as in the co-“ venant of works, can you think God leaves out “ the children of his people from the covenant of “ grace ?” What ! are our natural offspring born in the covenant of grace, as *Adam's* were in the cove-“ nant of works ?—where then is the need of being born again ?”

ONCE more : You, Sir, tell young people that erroneous persons “ make it their busines, by some “ means, to get their affections first, that they might “ more easily blind their judgment, or flatter their “ pride, inflame their prejudice, &c.”\* But I desire to know what you are doing in many of these pas-“ sages ? In some of them, while you are expressing your affection for children, it seems as if you would liken us to *savages* that murder families of little ones : as for instance, where you say, “ are they not taking “ some direct course to destroy the church, by pluck-“ ing up the seed of it ? like as destroying a nursery, “ is committing a waste on the orchard.” Appendix, page 2. Now destroying a nursery, and killing of it, I suppose are the same. Let the comparisom then be examined.—*David* was born of religious parents ; yet he says, he was *conceived in sin* ; and elsewhere he compares sinners to *thorns* :† well, I presume, no prudent

\* Sober-mindedness, page 16.

† *Psal.* li. 5.    *2 Sam.* xxiii. 6.

prudent husbandman will think his orchard injured, by refusing to transplant a nursery of thorns into it, 'till they are grafted, or changed into apple trees. The application is easy. While therefore you, Sir, speak against others blending the judgment, by inflaming the passions, pray don't do the same thing. I once knew what it was to have my mind held long in suspence about these things, and one great means of it, was such injurious representations as I have mentioned, which caused me to enlarge more upon them : but I will now give you positively a brief summary of the scripture grounds of my present principles and practice about baptism.

AND as to *Abraham's* covenant, in *Gen. xvii.* where all the controversy centers, let it be called by what name it well ; yet, this I find is certain, that it included all his household, and that every male therein, whether born in his house, or bought with money, were ordered to be circumcised. Accordingly he circumcised himself, his son, and *all the men* of his house ; which, I conceive, constituted the old testament church. Well, in *Jacob's* time, this church went into *Egypt*, where they endured a long season of bondage, 'till by an almighty hand they were delivered ; and then the *passover* was instituted, and the rules concerning it were very express, that *no uncircumcised person* should eat thereof : but every man's servant that was bought for money, when he was circumcised, then should be eat thereof : all the congregation of *Israel* should keep it. *Exod. xii. 43—48.* Here the limits of the church appear to be the same that was given to *Abraham*, and that what qualified for circumcision, did also for the *passover* ; and no room is left to dispute, but that the church was national. This church I followed on to mount *Sinai*, where many other institutions and rules were given to them, and among the rest, a great deal

is said about the flesh of persons being defiled, and made unclean, and concerning the means and manner of cleansing : and one particular is, that, *If a woman have conceived seed, and borne a man-child, then she shall be unclean seven days—and in the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.* Lev. xii. 2, 3. In this, I conceive, is discovered the plain reason why *Abraham* was directed to circumcise his seed at *eight days old*, and not before ; even because he who knew all his works and designs from the beginning, knew what precepts and directions he designed to give to that church, to shew who were clean, and who not : and therefore he ordered it so, that none might be circumcised till they were clean. And the apostle shews, that those cleansing of the flesh, were typical of moral and spiritual cleansings of the soul : for, says he, *if the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh ; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who thro' the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God ?* Heb. ix. 13, 14. And surely, to be *clean* in this sense, is as necessary a qualification for special ordinances in the gospel church, as the other was in the *Jewish church*.\* This will further appear if we observe,

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\* As to that text, in *1 Cor. vii. 14.* of children's being called *holy*, which is often brought in this controversy, it appears, that the apostle is there answering a case of conscience which they wrote to him about, (ver. 1.) which was doubtless occasioned by their reading in *Ezra, x. 3*, that the *Jews* were obliged to *put away all the wives, and such as were born of them*, which they had taken of other nations, that were not of their religion. This might naturally cause the enquiry, whether they must do so now or not ? The answer is, no :—for the unbelieving companion is *sanctified*, and the children *holy*. So the same apostle elsewhere says, of various creatures, which in *Moses's law* were called *unclean*,

observe, that when the iniquity of the Jews was got to such a height, as to bring upon them the *Babylonish* captivity, that God did then, by the prophet *Jeremiah*, not only promise their return from thence, but also declares, that, "Behold, the days come, saith the *LORD*, that I will make a *new covenant* with the house of *Israel*, and with the house of *Judah*: NOT ACCORDING to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of *Egypt*; (which my covenant they brake, altho' I was an husband unto them, saith the *LORD*)---but this is the covenant that I will make with the house of *Israel* ;—after those days, saith the *LORD*, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts ; and will be their *God*, and they shall be my people : and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the *LORD* : for they shall all know me, from the least of them, to the greatest of them, saith the *LORD* : for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." *Jer. xxxi. 31—34.*

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*clean*, they are *sanctified* by the word of *God* and *prayer*. *1 Tim. iv. 5.* i. e. They are, by the *law of Christ*, made warrantable for to be thankfully received and improved now by his saints ; so in this case, I conceive, he held forth, that if the unbeliever is pleased to dwell with the believer, that family privileges may be warrantably enjoyed, and family duties acceptably performed, by believing souls : else, if their companions must be put away, then their children, as *unclean* things, must be put away too. This I take to be the plain sense of the words : for by comparing the various places in scripture, where these terms are used, I find, that the sense of the word *sanctified*, is ever full as strict as the word *holy* : therefore, if the one does here intitle the children to baptism, the other must give the unbelieving companion as good a right thereto ; which, I presume, will hardly be allowed by any.

THIS prophecy is expressly applied to CHRIST's abolishing the constitution and ordinances of the Hebrew church, and introducing a *better covenant, established upon better promises.* Heb. viii. 6—13. That covenant when they came out of *Egypt*, was made with *literal*, this with *spiritual Israel* : that was made with *Abraham's natural seed* ; this with his spiritual children. And I really think, that the chief controversies among God's people, about the subjects of gospel ordinances, are principles caused by their not duly distinguishing between type and anti-type, and between the natural and spiritual seed of *Abraham*, which *Paul* takes so much pains to keep distinct. See *Rom.* ii. 28, 29, and ix. 6—13. *Phil.* iii. 3. And as the covenant here spoken of, which constitutes the gospel church, is declared to be *not according to that which was made with the church of Israel*, when they came out of *Egypt*, but a *better one*, may we take a little view of the difference ? Some of the excellencies of *this above that*, are,—*that* was outward in *their flesh* ; *this is written in the heart*. Many that were in *that covenant*, had not *eyes to see, nor ears to hear* :\* while all that are in *this*, *know the Lord, from the least to the greatest*. Great numbers of *that church* *brake God's covenant*, and *he regarded them not* : but of these, he says, *I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more*. And let it be particularly noted, that one principal advantage which they had by circumcision, was that, † *unto them were committed the oracles of God* ; and many means were used for the conversion of members *within the church* : whereas now, the gospel is freely *preached to all nations*, and the *lively stones*, which are the materials for this *spiritual house*, ‡ *which is the anti-type of Solomon's temple*,

\* *Deut.* xxix. 4.† *Rom.* iii. 2.‡ *1 Pet.* ii. 5.

temple, are prepared without,\* before they are builded together, for an habitation of God, thro' the spirit.† And I believe this is the plain design of those words, that they shall teach no more every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord ; even because they shall all know him, from the least to the greatest : which surely cannot be intended to prohibit public or private teachings, in gospel times ; but that all that are truly in this covenant, do know God, and have not that to learn now ; and therefore evidences of persons being in such a state, should ever be carefully look'd after, in order for admission into the church.

EXACTLY agreeable hereto, is the language of the messenger that came to prepare the way of our LORD ; for when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come ? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance. And think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father : for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. Matt. iii. 7—9. How plainly does this shew, that henceforth Abraham's children are to be reckoned not in a natural, but in a spiritual line, even that they are only such as God hath raised up to him, by his creating power ? and that fruits meet for repentance, are necessary to prepare any person for baptism. And thro' all the accounts that we have of his administrations of that ordinance, no intimations appear of any children's being brought thereto on their parents right.

WELL, if he gave no such intimations, yet you say his master did, when he said, " suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come to me, for of such

“ such is the kingdom of heaven.” Tho’ upon a careful search into this affair, I can find no account who those children’s parents were, nor the least hint that this liberty and invitation to *come to him*, was limitted only to the children of believers. No,—but without any such limitation, he says, *suffer little children to come to me*; and when we have evidence that any, let them be as little as they will, have really *come to Christ*, ’tis readily granted that they belong to his *kingdom*, and have a right to the ordinances thereof. And as that call to come to him is not limitted to believers children, so neither does he say, *all such*, but *of such is the kingdom of heaven*; which, I believe, comprehends these two things, *viz.* 1. That the chief of them that ever do come to him, and so belong to the kingdom of grace here, and of glory hereafter, come in their early days. *David*, speaking of the conquests of this glorious king, and of his people’s being willing in the day of his power, says, *from the womb of the morning, thou hast the dew of thy youth*. *Psal. cx. 3.* 2. That none belong to that kingdom but little children, in a spiritual sense: hence, ’tis immediately added in *Mark x. 15. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.*

THIS is further confirm’d by *Matt. xviii.* where you say, “ *CHRIST* esteemed *those* little ones as believers, visibly so;” as if all the little children of professors were esteemed believers: tho’ what the evangelist says, is, that *Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst, &c.*—and he said, *Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.* Ver. 2, 4. Which shews that *this* little child was a real saint. And that he was so, is further evidenced by two things; one is, that *CHRIST* says the same of receiving of him, as he does elsewhere of receiving the

apostles, viz. *Whosoever shall receive one such little child, receiveth me.* Ver. 5. Matt. x. 40. The other is, that JESUS says of these little ones which believe in him, that, *in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my father.* Ver. 10. Now the angels are sent forth to minister for the heirs of salvation. All which proves plain enough, that we ought earnestly to labour, to shew to children the necessity of believing in CHRIST, and that many little ones do believe in him: but 'tis so far from proving that CHRIST esteem'd all the natural offspring of his people to be believers, that I really think such a notion is both false and dangerous.

AND if we come to the commission, in *Matt. xxviii. 19.* our translation says, *Go, teach all nations, baptizing them.* Mr. Dickinson renders it, *disciple all nations, and Dr. Dodderidge, proselyte all nations;* either of which plainly carries in it, that there is a work to be done to the subjects, before they are baptized: namely, that they are first to be *taught, to be made disciples, or proselytes;* (see *Job. iv. 1.*) which is abundantly confirmed by the evangelist *Mark, chap. xvi. 15, 16.* *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.* What can be plainer than this is? that CHRIST's orders are to preach the gospel to all nations, and that he that believeth it, and so becomes his disciple, is to be baptized: but not the least word of direction to baptize any other. And as little warrant (I believe) can be found from the apostles practice: for when the three thousand were pricked in their hearts, and cried, *What shall we do?* Peter said unto them, *repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost:* for the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. *Acts ii. 37--39.*

HERE let it be observed, that what is promised, is the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost.---No, says Mr. Dickinson, " it was the promise made to Abraham." Well, let it be so; but what is that promise? why, says Paul, CHRIST hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,---that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, thro' Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the spirit thro' faith. Gal. iii. 13, 14. And now, how much difference is there between Peter and Paul? both speak of the promises; and the blessings which both point out, are pardon, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost: likewise, both speak of them, not as things which belong to any by nature; but as that which is to be received as a gift: and one says, *repent and ye shall receive this gift*; the other speaks of receiving it *thro' faith*. All which speak, that none are heirs of that promise, but repenting and believing souls; and it is limitted in Peter's words, to *even as many as God shall call*. If it be asked, why then did he say, *to you and your children*? I reply, that they had imprecated the guilt of CHRIST's blood on themselves and their children, which now lay heavy on their consciences; therefore he holds forth a remedy equal to their misery even that the gifts of pardoning and renewing grace are in the promise freely proclaimed to them, and to their children, and to all that are afar off; and *as many as* come at the *call of God*, shall receive these great blessings: and so we read, in ver. 41, that *they that gladly received his word, were baptized*; but no hint is given, that any others were baptized but such. The same might be observed in the other account that we have in that book; yea, and that in the ver. *households* which Mr. Dickinson mentions; for when Paul and Silas went out of prison, they visited the houses

house of *Lydia*, and those which they found there are called *bretbren*, and they comforted them, and departed.

*Acts xvi. 40.* Concerning the jailor's house, the word *all* is used three times ; they spake the word to *all* that were in his house ;—*all* were baptized ; and he rejoiced, believing in God with *all* his house.

*Acts xvi. 32—34.* And why that word should include more in the middle, than in the beginning and end of the account, I can see no reason at all.—And the household of *Stephanus* are called, *the first fruit of Achaia*, and had *addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints*. *1 Cor. xvi. 15.* A pious household indeed ! and it must be proved, that there were some in these families that were baptized when they were not pious, before they can justly be brought for proof that we should baptize any others now.

I know 'tis said, that tho' we have no express mention of any others being baptized but believers ; yet, from *Abraham's covenant* we have reason to think their infants were brought in afterwards, and the demand is often made thus,—“ Children were once in covenant, and where were they cut off ? ” To which I answer, when *Israel* came out of *Egypt*, one direction which was given to them was, that when a stranger would join with them, *all his males* should be circumcised ;\* which shews what was the plan of the covenant when they came out of *Egypt* : but since, God declares, the new covenant is *not according to that* ; and the special difference is, that *all* who are in this *new*, or gospel covenant, *know him, from the least to the greatest*.† I wonder that any will still persist in that demand.—And since they do, I will add one text more, which I was lately pointed to by a friend ; *to wit*, the testimony of the apostle *James*, and the *elders* with him at *Jerusalem*. When *Paul* returned, and had

had given them an account of his success among the Gentiles, they glorified God, and then told him of a complaint that the zealous Jews had heard of him, which was, *That thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forfaze Moses, saying, that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.* As touching the Gentiles which believe, say they, we have written and concluded that they observe NO SUCH THINGS. *Acts* xxi. 21—25.

Not only that they should not observe the custom of circumcising their children, but *no such things* : nothing that bore any resemblance to bringing children into the church on their parents right.

Now, Sir, since CHRIST's forerunner warned the Jews against thinking to come to baptism on Abraham's right, and told them they must bring forth fruits meet for repentance ; since CHRIST himself, called little children to come to him ; but says not a word of their being brought to baptism before they do come to him ; yea, instead of that, he in the commission orders that *all nations be taught and believe before they are baptized* : and since, his ministers, in obedience thereto, baptized those that gladly received the word at Jerusalem ; they that believed Philip's preaching at Samaria ;\* and such as heard and believed at Corinth,† &c. but no account of their baptizing any but such :—And on the other hand, since God declares that the new covenant is not according to that which he made with Israel, when he brought them out of Egypt ; and that one special difference is, that all who are in this covenant know him, and have his law written in their hearts ; and since no custom like circumcising children on their parents account, was to be observed among the believing Gentiles, I dare not follow the multitude in bringing children to the initiating

tiating ordinance of the gospel church on their parents faith, let there be as great or good men as there will that do it ; knowing that I have but one master in all these things, to whom I must give account. And I believe his orders are, that none should be admitted into the ministry but *faithful men, or men full of faith and the Holy Ghost* ; and that none ought to be received into the church but real believers.

Tho' when things are brought up to this point, many start off and say, " we can't know who are such, and who not." And if it is replied, that CHRIST says, *you shall know them*. The question is presently put, " What ! are you *infallible* ?" and after putting the word *satisfactory* on one side, and *infallible* on the other, hot disputes have followed, which have often been carried to extremes on both sides, in our days. Yet, after all this noise, CHRIST's word stands good still ; *Give not that which is holy unto dogs ; and, beware of false prophets. Ye shall know them by their fruits.* Matt. vii. 6, 15, 16. " Aye, say some, " if men live scandalous lives, we may know them " to be bad men ; but if they are moral, we must " have charity for them." But I believe that our LORD has given the best explanation of this rule himself : *For, says he, every tree is known by his own fruit :—a good man out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good ; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil : for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.* Luke vi. 44, 45. This shews, that by *fruit*, he means that which is *brought forth out of the heart*, particularly by *speaking* ; which surely comprehends a person's principles, experiences, and conversation. And tho' by *sheep's cloathing* or a plausible shew of religion, some may impose upon God's people at first ; yet he holds forth, that out of the *abundance of the heart*, they will discover themselves.

AND, dear Sir, if you had closely adhered to this rule, I hardly think you would have told the public as you do, that, " the FIRST inquiry should be, are they " ministers of CHRIST's sending ? and have they good " right to act in the capacity of public teachers,"\* before we hear them ? neither, I presume, would you have signified (as you largely do) that a principal mark of *deceivers*, is, their pretending to greater sanctity and concern for souls, than the *regular or standing ministers*.† As if CHRIST and his apostles, and multitudes of reformers since, did not profess greater sanctity and concern for souls than those who called themselves the regular and standing ministers of their day. Nay, a plea of being the regular and standing ministry, has often been one main pretence by which corrupt men have supported themselves against the power of Godliness. Witness the *Pharisees*, who plead that they were *Abraham's children*, and *Moses's disciples* ; and the *Pope* that claims a succession from *Peter*, &c. whereas, all ought to be tried by this divine standard ; and those that are found by their *fruits* to be *good trees*, should be owned as such ; and all that are found by their *fruits* to be *corrupt trees*, we ought to be ware of, let them have been introduced how they will.

HERE again, 'tis said, " you must not judge."— Permit me then to add a word about that also. And I find that a judging according to rule is required in church government and discipline ; *1 Cor. v. 12.* and so it is about what we read or hear. *Paul* tells the *Corinthians*, to judge what he said. *1 Cor. x. 15.* And no man ought to be judged before we bear him. *Job. vii. 51.* But, to judge after the flesh, and according to outward appearance ; to judge others for their *motes*, while a *beam* is in our *own eyes*, and for the *same things* that we do *ourselves*, are dreadful evils.

*Matt.*

\* Discourse on Sober-mindedness, pag. 37. † Ibid, page 17, note.

*Matt. vii. 1—5. John vii. 24, and viii. 15. Rom. ii. 1.* And so are the *speaking evil*, and *judging of persons* behind their backs. *Psal. l. 20. Jam. iv. 11.* And *speaking evil of things which they know not*, nor understand the nature of. *Jude x.* And a great branch of this evil, is judging pious persons, because they differ from us in some external points, which men may have different sentiments about, and yet be *received of God*. *Rom. xiv. Col. ii. 16.* 'Tis exceeding natural for us to think that all who hold sentiments different from ours, are influenced by bad motives: but this we are cautioned against, because none but God can *make manifest the counsels of the heart*. *1 Cor. iv. v.* And all breaches of these rules, I desire to condemn and renounce in myself and all others.

AND I would intreat you, Sir, to review your censure against us, and see if they can stand with these rules. Particularly, that charge, that we are "going in the way of *Cain* and *Core*, in departing from God's institutions, and without any scriptural warrant, setting up separately ourselves." Now in order for a just view of the case, it may be needful to give a brief narrative of facts relating to this affair.

LET it then be remembered, that before that blessed revival of religion, which happened about twenty-three years ago, it was generally allowed there had been a great declension in the churches of *New-England*. Well, in that revival, great numbers flocked into the churches; of which I was one, tho' not without great struggles of mind, because I thought the gospel rules about admitting and disciplining of church members, were not so strictly observed as they ought to have been; yet, as I saw no other way to enjoy the precious ordinance of the Lord's supper, I joined with your church; where I continued more than two years, hoping for a reformation; but instead

of that, the custom was continued of letting such as did not pretend to be converted, bring their children to baptism ; and of receiving members upon written relations of experiences into the church, which I ever thought to be an uns scriptural way ; 'till from that, you obtained a vote to admit persons without any relation at all, if they did not see cause to give any. And the church, which was a *garden inclosed*,\* seemed to be laid as an open field ; and when a reformation was urged, many would bring the parable of the *tares* against it. And that *field*, which CHRIST says is the *world*, was often declared to be the church, and that the *good seed* and the *tares* must grow together therein till harvest.† I may here observe, it was after the *good seed* and *tares* both *appeared* by their *fruit*, that the servants were forbidden to gather up the *tares* : so that if the *field* was the church, then those that *appeared* by their *fruit* to be *children of the wicked one*, must be let alone therein, till the end of the world. *Matt. xiii. 26, 29, 38, 39.* Another thing I'll mention here, and that is, that tho' liberty for christians to improve their gifts, was allowed for a while, and it was owned that much good was done thereby ; yet afterwards an outcry was made of their invading the ministerial office, and the pulpits founded with warnings against *lay exhorters*, (as they were pleased to call them) and sundry ministers who had been greatly engaged in the work of GOD, turned and joined with others that had called it a delusion of the Devil, and united all their force to crush these *exhorters* : and the public were cautioned against admitting any into the ministry, but such as *man had taught* for that purpose *from their youth* ; yea, tho' they might

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\* *2 Cant. iv. 12.*

† Mr. John Cotton, preached a sermon at Attleborough, in January 1747, against the separation, and printed it ; throughout which, he improves the parable in that line.

be better qualified than others that were then ordained.\* While there was hardly a person in the land that *man had taught* for that purpose, but what might be admitted into the ministry if they would: and it was often declared, that the call of the people, with the laying on the hands of the presbytery, was the call of God. But if any others, from any inward teachings and influence, adventured to preach without that, they were called disturbers, deluded pretenders to an extraordinary call, &c. (tho' they did not pretend to any higher call than what they believed every minister ought to have) and when that did not stop them, the *secular arm* was called in, and several were imprisoned for no greater crime than preaching the gospel without the ministers licence.† And many have said, both then, and since, that " if it was not for the defence and support of the civil authority, all our churches and ministers would soon be broke up." A great deal of *force*,‡ has also been used for ministers support.

THESE, Sir, were certain facts; and most of them known to yourself:—and tho' I am far from justifying every step of our conduct; in the manner of our withdrawing, or since; yet the principal grounds of our withdraw, I believe, were just. *The way of Cain*, according

\* See Mr. Edward's thoughts on that work, in five parts, 1742, page 264, &c.—And my discourse on an internal call, page 82, 83.

† One of which was Mr. Thomas Marsh, who had, for many years, been a deacon in good esteem, in the second church in Windham.—He was confined in Windham goal, from January to June, 1746. I visited him there, and found him confined in close prison, and not allowed the liberty of the yard, tho' sufficient security was offered for him; while one Dr. Holloway who was put in for murder, in the room over his head, was allowed, with an officer to attend him, to visit the sick, in several parts of the town. This would naturally put one in mind of *Barabbas* and *Jesus*.

according to your own explanation, was “ a departing from God’s institution, and devising one of his own, which he offered without faith.” Well, here was our very difficulty, you would admit those to offer their children to baptism, that did not pretend to have *Abel’s* faith, and opened a door for others to come to the *LORD’s* table, without giving the church any account that they had that faith, and in these, and some other things, you had warped off from the original constitution of the church ; therefore we withdrew from you, holding near or quite to it’s first principles : and to this day, I may boldly say, that our societies in general, hold as fully to the doctrinal articles of your church, as any in the land ; and the only reason of my leaving infant baptism since, was because I found it wanted “ the stamp of divine institution upon it.” And I might say the same, as to the mode of sprinkling : for the numerous and plain accounts we have of their baptizing in *rivers*, and where there was *much water*, and of their going *into*, and coming *out of the water*, together with it’s being twice called a *burial*, fully satisfied me that *CHRIST* and his *apostles* were baptized by immersion : and the arguments of some to the contrary, appeared to me but weak ; and so they have to many *pædobaptist* writers too. Dr. *Wall*, who took great pains to prove infants to be subjects ; yet, as to the ancient mode, says, \* “ Their general and ordinary way was, to baptize by immersion, or dipping the person, whether it were infant, or grown man or woman, into the water. This, adds he, is so plain and clear, by an infinite number of passages, that as one cannot but pity the weak endeavours of such *pædobaptists* as would maintain the negative of

\* History of infant baptism, vol. II. page 291. Vide *Craigby’s* history, vol. I. preface, page 6.

“ of it ; so also we ought to disown, and shew a dislike of the prophane scoffs which some people give to the *English antipedobaptists*, merely for their using dipping. 'Tis one thing to maintain, that that circumstance is not absolutely necessary to the essence of baptism ; and another to go about to represent it as ridiculous and foolish, or as shameful and indecent ; when it was in all probability the way by which our blessed Saviour, and for certain was the most usual and ordinary way by which the ancient christians did receive their baptism."

So that the way it seems he has to support sprinkling, is by supposing it not absolutely necessary to keep to the ancient mode in that ordinance. But tho' after *Israel* had got fine houses to dwell in, they likely thought they could keep the feast of tabernacles well enough in them, and not take the pains to build *booths* ; yet, when their houses had lain desolate seventy years, those which returned from captivity found it duty to return to the ancient pattern. (*Lev. xxiii. 42. Nehem. viii. 14—18.*) And so I believe God's people will in this case, sooner or later. But to return from this digression.

INSTEAD of our departing from God's institutions, the very cause of our departing from you, was because of your holding these things, which we could not find the stamp of his institution upon : from whence I leave others to judge, who most resemble *Cain*, in treating their brethren as he did his brother. Concerning *Core's company*, we read, that they were famous in the congregation, men of renown : and they gainsayed *Moses* and *Aaron*, whom God had called to teach and lead his *Israel*, and they said, *Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, even one of them—wherefore then lift you up yourselves, &c.* *Numb. xvi. 2, 3.* Now, who are they in our day that all the congregation are holy, and that their voice

in calling ministers, is the voice of God ? So far are those who espouse an internal call by the divine spirit, from lifting themselves up in this matter, that, I presume, they could freely say as *Moses* did before this, *Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that he would put his spirit upon them.* But we dare not say, that being taught and called of men, without that spirit, can make them true ministers of **CHRIST**. Let it also be observed, that *Cor* raised a mob against *Moses* and *Aaron*; but we allow of no such thing, but only desire peaceably to worship GOD according to our consciences, among ourselves; believing that **CHRIST**'s church is founded in the *truth*, and supported by it, + against all the powers of earth and hell. And those that still go on in those churches, which rulers, ministers and people have often declared, would not stand if i were not for the support of the civil authority, we leave in the hand of GOD, praying that he would in his own time, *destroy the face of covering cast over all people*; + and cause his light and truth to prevail every where.

AND to conclude;—what I aimed at in this letter was, not a dispute upon every branch of these controversies; that has been often done already: but to endeavour to shew the injustice of the reproache which you have cast upon us, and upon the truth thro' us; and to open a little of the true state of the case between us; and thro' the whole, to shew a proper respect to mens persons, and yet to speak the truth plainly, according to the best of my understanding. How far I have accomplished what I aim'd at others must judge: and if you, Sir, or any others, can convince me, in a friendly way, of any mistake, hope I shall take it kindly; tho' I am not to be frightened

ighted out of truth by hard names. So desiring you calmly and seriously to review your treatment of us, and of our principles,—and wishing you the best blessings, I rest, dear Sir, *Yours, &c.*

ISAAC BACKUS.

*Middleborough, April 9, 1764.*

Postscript.

SINCE I finished the foregoing letter, I have thought so much of one thing, that I concluded to add a little upon it here ; and that is, your saying, Do not the late separations already discover their nature by their fruits ; in that some have by this time apostatized even from all religion :—while some others are renouncing infant baptism, and going fast to the like dreadful apostacy ?” Now, sir, unless you could have shewn, that renouncing the notion of bringing persons into the church and into the ministry, by natural generation, and human instruction and influence ; and holding to the necessity of regeneration, and divine teachings and influence in order thereto ; (which are the central points of the controversy) I say, unless you could have shewn that these principles had a natural tendency to apostacy, there is not a whit more of justice in this ensure, because of the unhappy conduct of some that ave been among us, than there would be for a person that was prejudiced against your denomination, to say, Do not these ministers discover what they are by their fruits ; in that some of them have already been proved to be whore-mongers and drunkards, “ and

“ and others are going fast in the same way ? ”. But where is the person or people under heaven that would be willing to be judged by such a rule ? surely there is none. And whether we believe it or no, yet all will be made to know, sooner or later, that, *with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged : and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again* Matt. vii. 2. Which words, if rightly view'd, would be enough to deter every one from condemning any for their neighbours evils, which they abhor.

THE truth is, that notwithstanding our many mistakes and wanderings, (for which we have great cause to be humbled before GOD) yet, instead of *apostacy*, there has been a great *revival* of religion within these two or three years, among these people that you bear so hard against, in many parts of the land. I know that two years ago, after such a revival in the north-east part of your town, one that joins with you in ranking such instruments as were used in that work, *with Core and his company*, declared there, publicly, that, “ In times of general security, Satan finds it to “ his advantage to stir up persons to false zeal, and “ seeming religion,” and that “ he can and does of- “ ten affright many, filling them with terror and fears “ of hell.”\* And when he comes to lay down *marks* to *try the spirits* by, he says, “ I shall confine myself “ to such *marks and characters*, which, as I appre- “ hend, best suit with those appearances of Satan in “ the garb of an angel of light, which of late years “ he has assumed.”† Which plainly insinuates that the work which had then been among the *separatists* in

\* Mr. Whitaker’s sermon on the Trial of the Spirits, preach’d March 17, 1762, page 4.—N. B. When souls are awakened, Satan often fills them with fears that heaven will not receive them, and so would drive them to hell ; but that he stirs up the secure, and fills them with fears of hell, I believe is far from being true.

† Page 14.

In that place, was a delusion of Satan : yet after all his insinuations, take the very marks which he lays down, according to the plain language of scripture, without turning them into allegory, (as he says many do) viz. That the true spirit first brings light to the understanding, shewing to persons by the truths revealed in the word, the moral evil of their hearts and lives, and the abominable nature of sin as committed against God, till they find themselves utterly unable to obey the law aright in one point or tittle. And that it leads men to trust in CHRIST as he is exhibited in the word, and to rest upon him there. That it empties men, and makes them become as *little children, teachable and bumble* : yea, and charitable also to others. And lastly, that the true spirit teacheth us, that religion consists chiefly in *practice*, i. e. in *holy actions*, arising from *holy tempers*, and *divine exercises of the heart*. I say, according to these marks which he lays down, there is abundant reason to believe that there has been a glorious reformation, and several hundred souls turned from sin to God, in many parts of *New-England*, within these two or three years; and a very great part of it among those which you represent as going in the way of apostacy. Yea, and such a glorious work is now going on in your own place, which I hope will be a means to convince you, Sir, and others, of their wrong charges against us.

F I N I S.

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ERRATA.—In page 21, line 15, for cleansing read cleanings. Page 31, line 17, for plead read pleaded. Page 32, line 17, for censure read censures.—These errors, and such others as may have escaped unobserved, the candid reader is requested to rectify with his pen.

With this Letter may be had of Philip Freeman, Bookseller, in Union-Street, Boston;

THE Divine Right of Infant Baptism, examined and disprov'd :—Being an Answer to Mr. Dickinson's Dialogue on that Subject. By JOHN GILL, D. D.

And also his Reply to Mr. Clark's defence thereof.